FUNDAMENTALS OF ISLAM

Compiled by
S. G. VENKATARAMANAN

ADYAR

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"You must feel perfect tolerance for all, and a hearty interest in the beliefs of those of another religion, just as much as in your own. For their religion is a path to the highest, just as yours is. And to help all, you must understand all."

At the Feet of the Master, p. 53 (Miniature Edition)

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OPENING PRAYER

Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds,
The Gracious and the Merciful,
Master of the Day of the Religion!
We worship only Thee,
And we look for help to Thee alone!
Guide us to the righteous path,
The path of those whom thou hast given grace,
Not of those on whom displeasure falls,
Or those who go astray.

This noble little prayer, one of the earliest revelations inspired in the Prophet, rightly stands as the opening of the holy Book. In it can be found the essence of the whole teachings of Islam, and it is an essential part of every Muslim's prayers many times a day.

(*The Gospel of Islam*—Duncan Greenlees)

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INTRODUCTION

THE soul of Islam is its declaration of the Unity of God; its heart is the inculcation of an absolute resignation to His will.

(Sir E.A.) [1]

It has been said that the Prophet's life is one of the best examples in history of the amazing influence one man can have upon society.

(D. G.) [2]

A report of Anas says that during the ten years that he was in the Prophet's service at Medina, he was not once scolded by him. He never kept anybody in slavery. As soon as he got a slave, he set him free.

(S. A. R.) [3]

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[1] *Pearls of the Faith*, By Sir Edwin Arnold. (Sir E. A.)

[2] *The Gospel of Islam*, By Duncan Greenlees. (D. G.)

[3] *Islam—The Religion of Humanity*, By Syed Abdur Razzaque. (S.A.R.)

The love of God, the love of His creation and a keen desire for the Universal Brotherhood coupled with zeal always keep the Muslims inspired to carry with them the message of Islam to the people of every land into which they penetrate.

(S. A. R.)

In order to make the tie of Universal Brotherhood quite strong, Allah reveals to the Holy Prophet to say of him: " I am only a human being like to you."

(S. A. R.)

Our God and your God is one, and to Him we are self-surrendered.

(S. A. R.)

LIFE OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD[1]

He "opens his innocent eyes on the light" on the 29th August A.D. 570 in Mecca, born of the Quraish clan. A few weeks ere his birth his father had died—his father who in the full bloom of his manhood had been given up by his own father as a human sacrifice, and whose life was saved as it were by a miracle by the mouth of the temple priestess, who bade that the youth should be spared.

* * * *

As he (the Prophet) walks through the streets of Mecca the children run out and cling around his knees. He has ever a tender word for the child, a caress for the little one; he is never known to break his word; his kindly counsel is ever at the service of the poor and the distressed. Al-Amin, they call him "the trustworthy" that is the name his

[1] Extracts taken from *Seven Great Religions*, by Annie Besant.

neighbours give him, the man worthy to be trusted, noblest name a man can win.

* * * *

Far into the desert he flies, month after month, throughout these fifteen years; in the desert cave in solitude he lies, in meditation, in prayer, in bitter self-doubt and self-questioning, in wondering what is the message that he hears: "In the name of thy Lord, cry." Who is he that he should cry? What is he to cry? Rent with doubt and anguish, with self-despair of his own power, he, illiterate, untrained, how shall he trust the inner voice that calls him? Thus fifteen years pass, years of struggle that few can measure, and then on one night of nights as he lies there on the ground in his agony, a light shines around him from Heaven, and a glorious form stands before him: "Rise, thou art the Prophet of God; go forth and cry in the name of thy Lord." "What shall I cry?" "Cry," the Angel says; and then he teaches him of the building of the worlds, and the making of man, teaches him of the unity of God, and the mystery of the Angels, teaches him of the life that lies before him.

Forth he goes, and home he rushes, on the ground at home he falls, and Khadija is there, "What shall I do?" he says to her; "Who am I?" "Nay," says the quiet voice of the faithful wife, "thou art true and faithful, thy word is never broken, men know thy character; God does not deceive the faithful; follow the voice then; obey the call." And the voice of the wife, the first disciple, gives the touch of courage to the human heart that fails before the greatness of the mission and he stands up, now no longer simply Muhammad, but the Prophet of Arabia.

For three quiet years he labours, and at the end of the three years, thirty disciples call him the Prophet of the Lord. Then comes his first public sermon, preaching of the unity of God, preaching against human sacrifice, preaching against lust, and drunkenness, and foulness of life. Then some more gather round him, touched by the fire which is breathed from his inspired lips. But with the gathering of others round him, fierce persecution breaks out, and tortures horrible, unbearable almost by human flesh and blood. They tear his followers in pieces; . . . they bid them deny

God and His Prophet; and the disciples die murmuring: "There is but one God and Muhammad is His Prophet." . . . At last his followers begin to fly and seek refuge under other rule—and so things went on for ten years, and then comes the end. And when prayers were over, they lift him (the Prophet) up in the mosque, too weak to stand. . . . He lies praying, and his voice sinks to a feeble whisper; it is the 8th June A.D. 632, and the Prophet leaves his worn-out body, to watch over, from a higher sphere, the religion he had founded and guarded.

A noble life, a marvellous life; verily a Prophet of the Lord. And withal so simple, frugal, humble, patching his own worn-out cloak, clouting his own shoes, when thousands were bowing to him as Prophet, and gentle to all around.

TEACHINGS OF THE PROPHET

Allah and Islam

Patient is Allah, and he loveth well
The patient, saith "the Book", and such as dwell
In kindness, asking pardon of their sins
Each dawn, and pardoning the blameable.

Islam! this is the Faith! thyself resign,
Soul, mind, and body, to the will divine;
The Kingdom and the glory and the power
Are God's and God's the government,—not thine!

There is no God but God! and He is All;
And whatso doth befall ye doth befall
By His decree; therefore, with fear and love
Upon His glorious names devoutly call.
Allah! His holy will be done!
Islam—we bow before his throne.

(Sir E. A.)

Angel

Truly, on those who say " God is our Lord," and try to stand upright, the angels constantly come down, (saying) " Fear not, nor grieve, but rejoice over the Garden which you have been promised. We are your friends in the life of this world and in the hereafter, and therein is for you what your souls desire and for you therein is all that you may ask for as a gift of welcome from the forgiving merciful One; and we do not come down save by your Lord's command." Angels follow each other for His sake before him and behind him, guarding him at God's command. Truly, God does not change what is in a people until they change what is in themselves.

Animals

In the Holy Qur-an animal life stands on the same footing as human life in the sight of the Creator. " There is no beast on earth," says the Holy Qur-an, " nor bird which flieth with its wings, but the same is a people like unto you—unto the Lord shall they return."

(S. A. R.)

Benevolence

Adhere to those who forsake you; speak truth to your own heart; do good to everyone that does ill to you.

(S. A. R.)

Charity

Islam lays great stress on charity, because charity cultivates the sacrificial spirit. Sacrifice is the main spring of all moral qualities. Al-Qur-an divides them under two headings. First, those that prevent us from injuring other's life, property and honour; and chief among these are Chastity, Honesty, Meekness and Politeness. Secondly, those that prompt us to do good to others. Among these are Forgiveness, Goodness, Courage, Truthfulness, Patience, Sympathy and Kindness.

(S. A. R.)

Conduct

Truly for those who like slander to be spread among the believers there will be a painful punishment in the world and the hereafter. When you welcomed it with your tongues and spoke with your mouth what you

know nothing about, you thought it a trifle, but it is very great in God's sight. Keep away from most suspicions, truly suspicions are a crime; and do not play the spy, nor backbite one another.

(D. G.)

Consideration for Others

A kind word and protection are better than alms followed by injury. O you who believe, do not make your charity worthless by hurtful scolding, like those who only give away their wealth to be seen by men, not from belief in God and in the last day.

If you publish the charity it is good, and if you hide it when you give it to the poor, that is better for you and will atone for some of your misdeeds.

(D. G.)

Death

He made life—and He takes it—but instead gives more; praise the Restorer, *Al Mu'hid*!

Sweet friends! what the women lave,
For its last bed in the grave,

Is a tent which I am quitting,
Is a garment no more fitting,
Is a cage from which at last,
Like a hawk my soul hath passed.
Love the inmate, not the room;
The wearer, not the garb; the plume
Of the falcon, not the bars
Which kept him from the splendid stars.

* * * *

Saith the Book: " Count not as dead
Such as for the Faith have bled;
Stark and red their bodies lie,
But their souls are in the sky,
Resident with God, who grants
All for which the spirit pants
Joyful are they, resting there
Free from sorrow, pain or fear;
Watching us who, left in life
Are not quit, as yet of strife;
But shall soon attain, to share
Allah's mercies, and declare—
Side by side with those—that He
Showeth grace eternally,
And withholdeth not the pay
At the ending of the day.

(Sir E. A.)

Now the worldly life is nothing but a play and a game, but the home of the hereafter is life indeed. God takes souls to Himself at the time of their death, and during their sleep those who do not die; and He keeps those for whom He has decided death, but sends back the others until a fixed time. Every thing is perishable save His face; every soul will taste of death. Indeed, the death you shrink from will surely meet you; what is with you fades away, but what is with God remains.

(D. G.)

The Garden of Bliss

But those who obeyed their Lord are driven on in batches to the Garden until, when they reach it, its gates are opened, and the angels come up to them from every gate, and its keepers say to those whom the angels caused to die good, "Peace be unto you! Enter the Garden, to remain, because of what you used to do. This is what you were promised, to everyone who repents and stands on guard, who reveres the Gracious One in secret and comes with a contrite heart." And they say,

" Praise be to God, who has made good to us His promise, and has let us inherit the land, that we may dwell wherever we please in the Garden." And good is the reward of the workers, sweet the sequel of the Home!

(D. G.)

Giving

Give more than thou takest:
If one shall salute thee,
Saying " Peace be upon thee ",
The salute which thou makest,
Speak it friendlier still,
As beseemeth good will;
Saying " Peace, too, and love
From Allah above
Be with thee ":—for heard
Is each brotherly word;
And it shall not be lost
That thou gavest him most.

(Sir E.A.)

God's Forgiveness

O you who believe, be heedful of God, and speak frankly; He will adjust your deeds for you, and forgive you your mistakes. God has

only to turn to those who do evil in ignorance and then quickly repent, and those who, when they commit some indecency or wrong themselves, remember God and ask forgiveness for their faults and do not knowingly repeat what they did. It is just these to whom God turns in mercy.

(D. G.)

God's Kindness

And if you would measure God's blessing, you could not calculate it, for He gives you of all you ask. O men, remember God's kindness to you; is there any creator other than God, who provides for you from the sky and earth, who creates, and then adapts; who measures out (the field of action), and then guides, who brings out pasture, and then turns it into brownish stubble?

(D. G.)

Heaven and Hell

When God fashioned Paradise,
Spake He unto Gabriel:
" See this place which We created
Where the justified will dwell."

Gabriel said, " My Lord I swear
By Thy Glory, none of men
Ever of its joys shall hear
But will strive to enter in: "

Round about His Paradise
God set sorrows and denials;
Laid the pathway steep and strait.
Hard to find and full of trials,
" Look again "—God said; and he
Looked, and came, and sadly spake:
" By Thy glorious majesty,
Not one man will entrance make! "

Then the Lord created Hell,
Set ablaze its ache and grieving;
Saying unto Gabriel,
" This is for the unbelieving."
Gabriel looked and said, " I swear,
By Thy splendour not a mortal,
When of hell-fire he shall hear,
Ever will approach its portal."

Round about those awful gates
Allah set soft sins and pleasures;
Made the pathway broad and plain,
Rich with joys and gifts and treasures,

" Look again ", said God; and he
Saw; and spake, " Save by Thy blessing,
O my Lord! there will not be
One that must not love transgressing."

(Sir E. A.)

Inheritance

The law of Mussalmans regarding women has been a model. They have been guarded in their own property; they cannot be deprived of a share of the inheritance from their parents, from their brothers, from their husbands.

(A. B.)

Loyalty

Truly, those who read God's Book and observe the prayers and give away some of what we have given them, both secretly and in public, may hope for undying gain. Yes, indeed, he who surrenders his purpose to God while doing good, his reward is with His Lord. No fear shall come on such, nor shall they grieve; they have all they wish for with their Lord. These are given their reward twice

over, because they are patient in driving away evil with good, and give away out of what we provided for them.

(D. G.)

Man's Origin

Man is created from a gushing fluid that came out between the loins and ribs. Of what thing does (God) create him? He creates him out of vital fluid and brings him to the proper size. Moreover, God created you from dust, then from a vital fluid, then gave you sexes,—and no female bears or brings forth without His knowledge. He creates you in the wombs of your mothers, shape after shape, in threefold darkness; then He made the way easy.

(D. G.)

Marriage

He created for you from yourselves a comrade on whom you might lean, and He put love and compassion between you. So marry what women seem good to you, two or three or four, but if you fear that you may not act justly, then one only; this leads to your not

offending. And you will never be able to deal equally between the women, however much you wish; but do not turn to (one) altogether, and then leave her in suspense. And let those who find no marriage try to keep chaste till God of his bounty makes them free of want.

(D. G.)

Mercy of Allah

Our mercy reacheth far;
We know ye what ye are,
And knew ye while ye lay clots in the womb;
Sin, and be sorry and amend:
Who seeketh God shall find Him in the end.

(Sir E. A.)

Penances

Penances and all sorts of monasticism are not permitted. Resorting to jungles and wildernesses is not allowed. It is told that the light of God comes to such houses where He is remembered. Of course every rule of physical, moral and spiritual cleanliness is

observed. One can attain spirituality by remaining in the civic life if he were true to his God and his fellow men, and did his duty to His Creator, and his neighbour.

(S. A. R.)

Quran

And now the luminous Book—it is truly a noble Reading in a hidden Book which only the purified may touch, sent down from the Lord of the worlds, and truly it is in the Source of the Book with Us, sublime, decisive. It is no made-up story, but a confirmation of what was before it and a detailed explanation of everything, and a merciful guide to a believing folk.

(D. G.)

Remembrance

"Remember me, I will remember you."

Man's remembrance of Him is to walk humbly in His ways and Allah's remembrance of man is to pour blessings on him.

(S. A. R.)

Repentance

Know ye not that God receives
Gladl back the soul which grieves?
Know ye not that He relents
Ere the sinner well repents?
Terribly His justice burns,
Easily His anger turns.

Spake our Lord: " If one draw near
Unto God—with praise and prayer—
Half a cubit, God will go
Twenty leagues to meet him so."

He who walketh unto God,
God will run upon the road,
All the quicklier to forgive
One who learns at last to live.

(Sir E. A.)

Righteous Ones

Piety is not that you turn your faces towards the east or the west; but the pious man is he who believes in God and the last day and the Book and the prophets, and who for love of Him gives away property to relations and orphans and the needy and the traveller and

the beggars, and in freeing slaves, and who observes the prayers and pays the poor-rate,—and those who keep their promise when they have promised, and are steady in distress and trouble and the time of conflict. It is these who are sincere; they are the righteous ones.

(D. G.)

Service

" The best among you is one who is best to his own people, wife is the best treasure in your house and she is the sovereign of your family. Respect your children and teach your daughters the best of manners!" As to our treatment of others, the Holy Prophet says: " None among you can be a true Muslim who does not give to his own brother that which he regards as most precious. All creatures are God's and he is dearest to God who is more energetic in his service (to others)."

(S.A.R.)

Sin

Man was not born in sin. " Certainly we created man in the best make." A man was not, therefore, born in sin, " but was Muslim

by birth, namely, capable of following the law, no matter whether he was born in a Muslim or a non-Muslim house."

(S. A. R.)

Suffering

Do you think you will enter the Garden when such things as (came on) those who passed on before you have not yet come to you? Misfortune and trouble hit them, and they were shaken until the messenger and those who believed with him said, "When is God's help? Is not God's help near yet?" for we shall certainly test you with something of fear and hunger, and loss of wealth and lives and crops; but comfort the patient who say, when a calamity occurs to them, "We are God's and truly we return to Him." Seek help in patience and prayer, but surely that is hard save for the humble.

(D. G.)

Tolerance

The moment we accept the Teachers of other religions as our own Teachers and Guides and make no distinction between

Prophet and Prophet, more than half of the trouble which separates brother from brother is over. Then comes the difference in tenets and doctrines which are mutually exclusive in their nature. The solution of this difficulty comes from Islam. The Holy Prophet declares "difference of opinion" to be a blessing.

(S. A. R.)

CLOSING PRAYER

(It is) the Lord of the worlds,
Who created me and guides me,
Who gives me food and drink,
Who cures me when I sicken,
Who causes me to die, then gives me life,
And who I hope will forgive for me my sins
On the Day of the Religion.
My Lord, grant wisdom unto me,
And join me with the sincere ones
And give me a good name in later (generations);
And place me among the heirs of the Garden of Delight.

(D. G.)